Dear Parents, Staff & Students

A very big welcome back to the 2013 school year. It’s wonderful to see the students of Alfords Point School wearing big smiles and ready for a great year. I’m sure everybody enjoyed the Christmas break and feel re-energised for the year ahead. Our first week has been very busy with our swimming carnival today. All students have come back very settled and are looking forward to the year ahead. Our classes will be formed on Monday. However as you know changes in classes can occur over the next two weeks as nothing is permanent at the moment. We have a couple of new families enrol at our school and I would like to thank parents who have already made them feel welcome and comfortable in joining our wonderful school community. Our weather is very hot and sticky at the moment but everyone is coping due to our air conditioned rooms. We are all looking forward to a great year.

Partnerships Making a Difference
Our theme again this year is “Partnerships Making a Difference” - Leading Learning. Our Partnerships will again be emphasised throughout the year as parents play such an important role as partners in learning. We will be organising parent workshops around Literacy and Numeracy but the first important meeting for parents is our Parent Information evening. Please try to attend these meetings so that you are well informed and understand our expectations. Thank you as always for your cooperation.

Best Start and Kindergarten 2013
This week our Kindergarten children for 2013 have been coming up to school in small groups to be assessed by our Kinder teachers Mrs Dobson and Mrs Lombe in the Best Start Program.

Numeracy and Literacy. Once this is established our teachers can plan appropriate learning for all children to move them along the learning continuum. Our Kindies 2013 have been very impressive in the way in which they have worked with the teachers. A big thank you to all our new Kinder parents who have accommodated us in this initiative. Kindergarten will start school on Monday 4 February. A morning tea will be held in the hall for all Kinder 2013 parents as well as our new parents. All parents are welcome as well.

Parent Information Evenings
As always the beginning of each school year is a new adventure for all involved. It is also time where new information is being distributed and new procedures put in place. To help parents understand school and classroom expectations we will be holding our usual Parent Information Evenings. A note has come home with dates and times. It is important that you attend these sessions to gain knowledge about learning for your child.

Information Evenings
ES1 - Monday 25 February 2013 at 5.30pm
S1 - Tuesday 19 February 2013 at 5.30pm
S2 - Tuesday 19 February 2013 at 6.30pm
S3 - Monday 18 February 2013 at 5.30pm

Also at these evenings teachers will be explaining how reading is taught and how you can help at home.

**DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 1</td>
<td>Swimming Carnival - Revesby Swimming Pool</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 4</td>
<td>Kindergarten Start - 1st day photos</td>
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<td>Feb 11</td>
<td>P&amp;C Meeting</td>
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School Attendance Policy
Attendance of all children at our school is a very important part of school life and one that we as teachers can become quite concerned about when children are away from school on a regular basis. Our students are our number one priority and attending school regularly is important both academically and socially for every child. The NSW Department of Education has set guidelines for School Attendance and parents need to be aware of these.

Parents are responsible for:
- Enrolling their children of compulsory school age in a government or registered non-government school or registering them with the Board of Studies for home schooling
- Ensuring that their children attend school regularly
- Explaining the absences of their children from school promptly to the school
- Taking measures to resolve attendance issues involving their children.

An application form for a Certificate of Exemption from Attendance at School needs to be filled out by parents if their leave is in excess of 20 days within a school year. All forms can be collected at the office and the school will issue a Certificate of Exemption.

The Annual School Swimming Carnival
Congratulations to all students, staff and parents for running such a successful day. I know it was a great day of sportsmanship and co-operation. Congratulations all students who participated. You are all stars. Our students who performed with brilliance and speed in the pool, congratulations you are off to the Zone carnival. Of course our carnival would not be a success without our parents working side by side with all staff and Mrs Burke’s Dad. It is a real team effort. Last but not least a big thank you to our newly elected House Captains. You had a big job and did well with war cries and building house spirit. Well done!

A Sun Smart School
This year we will be introducing some changes that will help us move towards a Sun Smart School. At the moment we have sun screen in all classrooms, we are scheduling our outdoor activities outside peak time and in the shade and sun protection/safety is taught in our curriculum. We as a school are slowly introducing a broad brimmed hat this year. It would be wonderful to see other students wearing this hat if their caps need to be renewed. This new hat does offer protection for the ears and the neck. Protecting our students, your children is always our number one priority.

Robyn Dowse
Principal

From the Library
Library classes will commence in Week 3 so can all parents ensure that children have a proper Alfords Point library bag. Our P&C work very hard to provide funds for our collection of books and it is heart breaking to find books damaged by leaking water bottles and other foods.

We have many Year 5 students who are keen to be library monitors. These students have been asked to write one paragraph outlining why they want to work in the library, their special talents and how they aim to be consistent in coming at least one lunchtime per week. This can be handed to Mrs Naoum on Monday morning, the successful candidates will be inducted at a special assembly on Wednesday 13 February.

Ann Naoum
Teacher Librarian

SRC News
On Thursday 7 February, all students in Years 1 to 6 who were not an SRC representative in the last two years (2011/12) will have the opportunity to informally introduce themselves to their class and briefly tell why they would make a reliable SRC representative for the class during Semester 1, 2013. This way the students in each class can make an informed vote. Perhaps the weekend would be a good time for interested students to gather their thoughts. Being a class SRC representative means that you attend meetings and pass on ideas from your classmates. The SRC try to organise activities that can be of benefit to students of Alfords Point Public School, also the community and various charities. Class elections will be finalised by the end of next week. An induction assembly will take place in the following week on Wednesday 13 February, 2013.

Maria Panourgias
4-6 Dance Camp & Dance Ensemble
Students from Years 4-6 are welcome to fill in an on-line application for
a) a 2 hour dance workshop and
b) To take part in the audition process to be eligible for the Sydney Region Dance Ensemble.
This will be conducted at Bronte Public School. If you are interested please see Mrs Davis as soon as possible for more information as applications close 7 February.

THE POINT CAFE
Please note that we have had to increase the cost of some items. A new menu/price list is now available.

Volunteers are always needed and very much appreciated. Please contact me on 0458 806 875 if you are able to help out in Term 1.

Volunteers for Week 2
Monday, 4/2
Jodie Followes & Bronwen Mackney

Wednesday, 6/2
Angela Rily, Patty Tourvas C/S & Thano Bakopoulos C/S

Friday, 8/2
Ha Thanh Brard, Vicky Tsomis & Alana Witting

Thank you
Jodie Followes & Megan Brice (Canteen Coordinators)

UNIFORM SHOP
In 2013 the uniform shop will be opening on Friday mornings at 8.45am - 9.30am in the hall.

Please report trespassers in the school grounds to:
School Security ☎ 1300 880 021
Menai Police ☎ 9541 4499

Honesty & Integrity, Friendliness & Acceptance, Excellence
Take care when going to and from school

Welcome back to the new school year! Sutherland Shire Council Parking Officers will be out at all Schools this year helping you to ensure that all children get to and from school safely.

Dropping off or picking up your children

Schools are areas where there is a lot of interaction between cars and pedestrians; your children. Children are small, hard to see, behave unpredictably, and are extremely vulnerable. Their lack of road experience means it is difficult for them to judge dangerous situations. Boys are twice as likely to be involved in pedestrian accidents as girls and children 10-14 years have the highest rate of child pedestrian casualties (RMS).

Have a plan

Plan with your son or daughter how you will collect them. When and where you will be after school? Where should they wait? Make sure they know not to try and get into your vehicle while it is still in traffic, even if you are stopped, they should wait until you have parked at the side of the road.

Plan to arrive AFTER the school bell goes in the afternoon, so your children are ready and waiting for you and you are not blocking traffic.

Parking offences in school zones carry heavier fines and loss of demerit points. Sutherland Shire Council makes no apologies for fining drivers who break the law around schools and in school zones.

No Parking Zones

A No Parking zone is a pick up and drop off area, you can stop here for a maximum of two minutes to drop off or pick up passengers and must remain within three metres of the vehicle. When parents park in a No Parking zone for longer than two minutes they prevent other parents from stopping to drop off or pick up their children, creating frustration and dangerous situations.

If you block the drop off and pickup areas, you risk a fine.

Some signs you will see around your School

You can find out more about the Australian Road Rules and other road safety information on the RMS website [www.rms.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au)

**Bus Zone**

*What does it mean?* You must not stop or park in a bus zone unless you are driving a bus.

*Why is it there?*

To prove a safe place for large buses to set down and pick up. Cars parking in bus zones put lives at risk by forcing buses out of “their” safety zone.

**No Stopping**

*What does it mean?* You cannot stop in this area FOR ANY REASON.

*Why is it there?*

To keep sight lines clear for drivers AND children so both have more time to avoid crashes.

**No Parking**

*What does it mean?* You can stop in a NO PARKING zone for a maximum of two minutes to drop off and pick up passengers. You must stay within three metres of your vehicle at all times.

*Why is it there?*

To provide a safe place for older children to be set down and picked up without endangering other children.
10 ways to promote good mental health & wellbeing in kids

This year make mental health a parenting priority. Kids with good mental health feel better, learn better and are better equipped to handle life’s curve balls.

It seems strange to talk about promoting good mental health in children.

Shouldn’t all children naturally have good mental health habits? After all, childhood is supposed to be a pretty relaxed time of life, free from the pressures and stresses that come hand in hand with adulthood.

Sadly, it doesn’t seem that way. According to the Australian Psychological Society one in seven Australian children experience some type of mental health issue, with ADHD, anxiety and depression being the most common.

Having good mental health doesn’t mean kids don’t experience difficulties or worries. Feeling worried, sad or fearful is normal. Kids who are mentally healthy are equipped to handle many of life’s curve balls that come their way. They also don’t let their emotions overwhelm them. As a result they learn better and have more friends as well.

As a parent it’s useful to reflect on the mental health habits that you promote in your kids. Here are ten ways to promote good mental health and wellbeing in kids.

1. **Model good mental health habits:** If you, like many parents, live constantly with stress then consider ways to actively minimise it, such as getting regular exercise, plenty of sleep and doing relaxation exercises. Not only will this improve your mental health, and make you easier to live with, it will send a strong positive message that mental health is important. It’s worth remembering that kids learn what they live, so make sure they see good mental health habits first hand.

2. **Make sure they get enough sleep:** Sleep is the one of the building blocks of mental health and wellbeing. Many children and just about all teenagers are sleep-deprived at the moment. Many parents are sleep-deprived as well! Children need between 10 and 12 hours’ sleep to enable proper growth and development, while teenagers need a minimum of nine hours. One of the single most powerful strategies to improve kids’ abilities to cope with stressful or changing situations is to ensure they get enough sleep.

3. **Encourage your kids to exercise:** When my mum would tell me all those years ago to turn the television off and go outside and play, she didn’t know she was promoting good mental health. She just knew that physical activity was a good thing for an active growing boy. Kids today get less exercise than those of past generations, which is an impediment to mental health. Exercise stimulates the chemicals that improve mood and release the stress that builds up over a day. An hour’s movement per day seems the minimum for kids. How much exercise does your child receive?

4. **Encourage creative outlets:** Kids should practise creativity if for no other reason than it helps them experience the state of ‘flow’. This is the state of getting so immersed in an activity that you forget about time and place. Writers and other creatives understand the concept of flow. It’s energizing and helps take stressed and worried kids out of themselves.

5. **Provide a space of their own:** Children of all ages benefit from having some space of their own where they can think. Quiet time and down time give boys the chance to let their thoughts wander around inside their heads. It also helps them get to know, and even like, themselves. Boys will often do their best thinking on their own, so they tend to retreat to their caves (bedroom) when things go wrong at school or in their relationships. They need to go within to find their own answer.

6. **Talk about their troubles:** A problem shared is a problem halved. Talking about what’s worrying you is a great way to remove the burden of worry and reduce anxiety. Some kids bottle up what’s inside, while others will catastrophise a situation, which can make matters seem worse. If your child has a problem let him know that his...
concerns are important to you. Kids often can't tell you what may be wrong, so be observant and gently ask questions to help gain a clearer picture of how kids may be feeling.

7. Help them relax: Make sure your child has a hobby or activity that relaxes them. The ability to relax and get away from the stresses of everyday life is essential. Some children who have real difficulty switching off may benefit from practising meditation or mindfulness, but most kids just need time to chill out so they can relax naturally. (I personally practise mindfulness and have found it a really helpful way to turn off my brain for a while!)

8. Have two routines – weekday and weekend: Most households are pretty highly scheduled these days. There are routines for getting up, coming home, eating meals and going to bed. These structures are necessary when we’re busy. Families need a second, more relaxed weekend routine that helps kids relax and unwind. It’s important to have this release valve if families are flat out busy during the week.

9. Foster volunteering and helpfulness: Social isolation is a huge predictor of poor mental health. Encourage your child to be connected to and help others in any way possible. Helping others reinforces social connectedness and the importance of being part of a community, as well as providing opportunities for positive recognition.

10. Bring fun and playfulness into their lives: Kids should be the kings and queens of play; however, some children live such full-on, organised lives that much of the natural fun and spontaneity has been stripped from their everyday life. Mucking around, which is code for having fun, is something many children of this generation don’t have time for. If you see your child constantly stressed or overwhelmed by events, change the mood by going to a movie, joining them in a game or seeking other ways to have some fun.

These ideas are basic common sense. However, as kids’ lives get busier these essentials get squeezed out. Here’s my recommendation to ensure that mental health habits aren’t overlooked or neglected.

First, see these habits as the building blocks of mental health. Don’t ignore or trivialise them. Talk to your children and tie these activities to their mental health. Do this in your own way and your own time.

Second, assess which of these habits need your attention and make some adjustments over time to push the pendulum back in favour of your child’s mental health.

FREE Michael Grose parenting resources to help you promote good mental health in your kids.

- Coping ebook: 12 essential coping strategies every child can use when life gets hard
- Poster: 10 ways to promote good mental health & well-being in kids
- Poster: 25 Great Parenting Ideas (to stick to your fridge)

These great resources are waiting for you at parentingideas.com.au/ParentingIdeas-Newsletter. They’re available for a short time only, so be quick!